

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A system and method for distributing information to interested users according to predefined preferences over the Internet. The invention provides improved techniques for reaching potential recipients, for simplifying the initial response by interested individuals, and for facilitating the gathering and organizing of information from those individuals.

The communication structure includes one or more servers and a plurality of dedicated client-side communication modules ("comm modules"). The servers store multimedia entertainment, advertising, or other information content and as well as profile information for the users of the comm modules. The stored information is organized according to the user profiles and is selectively made available for downloading on demand.

The comm modules are preferably made available for installation on the client-side computers by distribution as an adjunct to the information, advertising or entertainment content of a multimedia product such as a CDROM or DVD. Profile information is developed the first time a user goes on line after installing the software. The comm module displays a small icon on the user's desktop which changes state whenever there is new information on the server corresponding to the user's profile. Users may then access the information at their convenience.

The comm module includes a mini Web browser programmed for display of full-featured Web pages. It is compatible with operating systems commonly in use, and is runtime configurable and upgradable via server configuration messages. When the user

goes online, the comm module connects directly to a routing server at a predetermined Internet address.